

Accreditation for Alternative Schools in Idaho

The following is an analysis of accreditation questions and concerns. The recommendations were presented to the NWAC/AdvancED accreditation committee for consideration in April 2013.

Considerations

- School vs. Program
 - Core courses
 - Alt school requirements
 - Dual enrollment
- Size – natural break – base it on the divisor of 12
 - Separate teachers
- Enrollment status
 - Do the students enroll full-time? Specific courses?
 - Full year? Portion of year/pull out?
- Curriculum/instruction
 - Does it mirror the traditional school or is it unique
 - Inclusion of alt school requirements - who provides requirements?
- Graduation status
 - Different expectations or routes for graduation than the “traditional” high school
 - Diploma granting
- Achievement and accountability status – do they have or want their own Star rating
 - Example: IDVA alternative program – asked to have a separate rating for the school

Recommendations

- Schools would require accreditation, programs part of traditional school – would require participation in that schools accreditation

Meet 2 of the 5 following items:

- Schools with 36 students – based on previous year’s enrollment
 - 3 + teachers
 - Separate administrator
- If students are enrolled full-time for the year once eligibility determination is made, as opposed to enrollment for “make-up” or short periods of time
- Separate curriculum and/or different instructional methods
 - Example – online/virtual curriculum for a majority of the coursework vs. instructor lead
- Students graduate with a unique diploma
 - Example – Eagle Academy vs. Eagle High School
- Separate accountability rating - requested by district or administration
 - Example IDVA

	Accreditation	Part of school
# enrolled	36 +	< 36
Enrollment	Full-time	Partial enrollment
Curriculum/instruction	Unique/separate	Same/similar to high school
Graduation	Unique diploma	Same as high school
Accountability	Unique rating	Part of school

Is it a School or a Program?

The goals of this document are first, to list the essential attributes that define a school such that it is possible to distinguish schools from non-school entities; second, to resolve difficulties associated with reporting information on schools; and third to provide complete definitions that anticipate future changes in institutions for education and learning.

Definition of a School

The term school is used to refer to all educational institutions having the following characteristics:

- One or more teachers to give instruction;
- An assigned administrator; dedicated to school
- Based in one or more buildings; and
- Enrolled or prospectively enrolled students.

Is it a Program?

If any of the answers to these questions are yes, this is not a school and may be a program.

- Is the educational component of the entity secondary to the primary purpose, which is other than education?
- Do students, who are enrolled in the entity, remain members of the school that referred them?
- Do all students enroll on a part-time basis?

If any of the answers to any of these questions are no, this is not a school and may be a program.

- Can the entity, if it accommodates grade twelve students, grant a diploma to its graduates?
- Do the students have full access to all of the facilities and amenities of the entity?

Definition of a Public School

The US Department of Education further defines a public school as a kindergarten through grade twelve and/or adult educational institution that:

1. Is supported with public funds;
2. Is authorized by action of and operated under the oversight of a publicly constituted local or state educational agency;
3. Provides educational services to all students who are enrolled;
4. Has an appropriately credentialed teacher (or teachers) who provides instruction;
5. Has at least one appropriately credentialed administrator, usually a principal, who is responsible for all aspects of school administration including supervision and evaluation of staff, fiscal responsibility, student discipline and safety, supervision and evaluation of curriculum, and assessment of academic achievement and school accountability;
6. Administers statewide assessments to its students at the required grade levels;
7. Has an administrator, usually a principal, with access to and responsibility for maintaining official student records for all enrolled students;
8. Except for charters, implements a curriculum that fully meets state requirements as specified by the state and relating to required courses of study;
9. Is non-sectarian;
10. Except for charters, the entity's budget structure is consistent with the budget structure of schools operated by the authorizing agency;